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BRIEFWECHSEL ZWISCHEN CLEMENS BRENTANO UND SOPHIE MEREAU. Herausgegeben von Heinz Amelung. 2 Bände, XXXIV + 231 und 243, mit 2 Bildnissen. Leipzig, Insel-Verlag, 1908. Geheftet M. 7, gebunden M. 9.—

The bundle of letters here published for the first time, passed from Clemens Brentano into the hands of his sister Bettine, from her came into the possession of Varnhagen, and then, with the latter's *Nachlass*, was transferred to the keeping of the Royal Library at Berlin. Here it was jealously withheld from public scrutiny, save for an occasional favored nibbler, till now. Thus these letters have enjoyed a period of secrecy of more than a century, longer than is usually accorded even to documents of state.—It is still an open question whether the love letters of a poet are to be sacredly guarded as private property, or, like his poetry, belong to the nation and to the world. Herman Grimm was of the former opinion. He characterized these letters of his uncle as “für die Öffentlichkeit nicht geeignet” and had them put under lock and key. A succeeding generation has taken a different view, and Heinz Amelung, aided by Professors Erich Schmidt and Gustav Roethe, induced the Director of the Royal Library, Professor Adolf Harnack, to break the seal of secrecy that held them bound, and to allow their publication. Now the world is at liberty to read these missives of love, so ardent, so fiercely passionate, and again so hopelessly, helplessly despairing, that, in comparison with them, the most sentimental effusions of the Werther period pale into insignificance. A strange man, truly, was this vehement Romantic genius, a monster and a god. “Clemens, Du bist ein Dämon! Du bist wunderbar, Du bist ein Geist, kein Mensch!” exclaims Sophie.

In April, 1798, Brentano, then 19 years old, entered the University of Jena. Here he found gathered together the leaders of the newly rising School of Romanticism, and yielded himself wholly to their influence. Here it was, too, in their circle, perhaps in the Salon of Karoline Schlegel, that he met the poetess Sophie Mereau, the daughter of Gotthelf Schubart, who, 9 years his senior, lived in unhappy marriage with the Professor of Law, Ernst Carl Mereau. She was a beautiful and highly ed-

uated woman, the center of attraction at the soirées, and so talented that even Goethe and Schiller valued and encouraged her poetical ability, and published her productions by the side of their own in their periodicals, the "Thalia" and "Horen." This beautiful little woman, whom one contemporary describes as "eine reizende kleine Gestalt, zart bis zum Winzigen, voll Grazie und Gefühl. Beides an einen rohen Gatten gekettet und verschwendet", and another as "eine niedliche kleine Figur. . . Sie hat ein freundliches Wesen, spricht gern von literarischen Productionen, doch ohne Ziererey und ohne sich etwas darauf einzubilden", became at once the ecstasy and the torture of the young poet-student and the fate of his life. He soon lost his heart completely to her, paid her many visits, read to her from his works, and contributed to her "Kalathiskos." She returned his affection, and the intercourse between them became more and more intimate. However, not only "glückliche, heitere Stunden", but "schreckliche Szenen" and "Misverständnisse" are recorded in Sophie Mereau's *Tagebuch*. In August, 1800, their relations were entirely severed. Then follows the divorce of Sophie from her husband, Mereau, which was granted July 21, 1801, by a commission that was presided over by Herder. Both Sophie and Clemens are now away from Jena: she in Kamburg, he in Göttingen and on the Rhine. But he could not forget her. His attempts at reconciliation were unsuccessful. A year later, through the intervention of his brother Christian, their relations were renewed. He visits her in Weimar. Now follows that most extraordinary series of letters, in which he wrestles and writhes, rather than sues, for her love. She finally consents to union, but not to marriage. He again implores, entreats. She yields. On November 29, 1803, they are married at Marburg. Now follow the three years of married life with its ups and downs, chiefly downs, of which Clemens writes: "Ich fühle mein Dasein durch sie verschönt, aber beflügelt sehe ich es nicht. Sie ist ein gutes Kind und eine freundliche Frau, die ich liebe, aber ich bin ohne Gehülfe, ohne Mittheilung in meinem poetischen Leben, ich möchte sagen in meinem poetischen Tod"; and, "Du sollst Dich freuen, was Sophie mich lieb hat und wie gut sie ist. Wir leben in einer wunderschönen, einigen Ehe"; but also: "Es schmerzt, mit einem kalten Wesen täglich zusammen zu sein, das die

Häuslichkeit verachtet, ohne zu einem andern Dasein Talent zu haben . . . Sophie ist immer traurig, launenvoll und hart . . . Die Götter verwandelten sie in eine kalte, nordische Insel, ein traurig Feld, um das ich mein begehrend Herz bewegte . . . öde ist das Feld, muthlos, trüb, und liebt mich nicht. Sie fühlt das, so wie ich, wir haben oft ruhig darüber gesprochen." Sophie writes, "Das Zusammenleben mit Clemens enthält Himmel und Hölle, aber die Hölle ist vorherrschend." Achim v. Arnim whimsically describes the marital infelicities of the couple by comparing them to two expert organists, "die beyde recht spiellustig sind, doch fällt es erst dem einen ein zu spielen, wenn schon der andre angesetzt, da zieht er ihm die Pfeifen aus und will sie stimmen. Da tadeln sie sich wohl einander, dasz jenem nun die Töne fehlen, die er ihm selber ausgezogen und jener diesen, dasz er so ungezogen dazwischen pfeift und stimmt." In July, 1804, they leave Marburg and settle in Heidelberg. Achim spends the following summer with them, and the three work together on the "Wunderhorn". On October 30 1806, Sophie dies, together with her newly born daughter. Clemens laments, "Sie starb, und die Erde starb, alles starb! . . . Sophie, das Herz ist zerbrochen!" Thus ends this demonic love of a brilliant but erratic Romantic, and with it the years which were no doubt the happiest of his unhappy life.

The publication of these letters is a most important contribution to our knowledge of the Romantic School. It has corrected erroneous statements and dates that had gained currency through histories of German Literature; it gives us a vivid picture of the inner life of the Jena of this period, with its "Butterbrotgesellschaften" and social activities, opens new and interesting vistas into the private life of members of the circle, throws light on the attitude of Goethe and Schiller toward the new movement, and gives a pleasant picture of the fatherly interest they took in Sophie Mereau and other members. It has resurrected from oblivion a poetess and woman of no mean ability, and one who had influence upon men greater than herself. But first and foremost it has given us a new and better picture of Clemens Brentano, whom these letters reveal, as he had never been known before, to the very secrecy of his innermost being. The motives, the very psychology of this singular and often incomprehensible

man are mercilessly exposed by his own letters, so that we, too, can now comprehend, and assent to, the fine characterization of him by Eichendorff: "Eben darin liegt die eigentümliche Bedeutung Brentanos, dasz er das Dämonische in ihm nicht etwa, wie so viele andere, beschönigend als geniale Tugend nahm oder künstlerisch zu vergeistigen suchte, sondern beständig wie ein heidnisches Fatum gehaszt hat, das ihn Wahrhaft unglücklich machte."

The editorial work of these two beautifully printed little volumes is well and carefully done. The letters are an exact and dependable reproduction of the original MSS., with their odd spellings and ungrammatical cases, except for the correction of an occasional obvious slip of the pen. They are preceded by a suggestive and balanced Introduction, followed by helpful Notes, and supplemented with an exhaustive, extremely carefully done *Namen- und Sach-Register*. In some cases there may be a difference of opinion as to details of editorial work, and inevitable, but minor errors have crept in. A number of the latter are sub-joined.—The text has "von drei Aufzügen" (I, 182, l.3), while the MS. reads "Auftritten"; "meine Scheu" (II, 15, l.17), where MS. reads "eine"; "ich die" (II, 116, l.5), MS. reads "die ich"; in the dating of the letter II, 117, the brackets should include only "den 14.", the rest is given in MS. These slips are probably chargeable to the proof reader.—In the Notes, "Karl" should have been annotated under I, 15, its first appearance, instead of p. 29; "Mayer" (I, 59) might have been annotated or provided with a reference to Majer to show the identity of the two; "Gräfinn" (I, 87, and II, 54 and II, 58) should have been annotated to show that Charlotte von Ahlefeld is the person in question; "Johanna" (I, 175) and "Hanne" (II, 96) ought to have been annotated instead of merely giving the name of Johanna Körner in the *Register*; "Protegee" (II, 28) ought to have been annotated or a reference made to II, 46 where it is explained; "Jemand aus Norden" (II, 47) might well have been provided with a reference to II, 30 and the note to that passage; "Pierer" (II, 182) should have been annotated, though given under Schubart in the *Register*; "Ankunftsfest" (II, 116) should have been annotated; "Liebhaber" in the Notes II, 217 should be preceded by 134, the page on which it occurs; a note might also have been

added on the peculiar expression, "Es ist [nicht] der Wehrt" (I, 161, l.9, and II, 204, l.15).—The *Register* should read under "Philadelphia" I, 48 instead of I, 148; under "Guido Reni" I, 58 instead of I, 180; under "Rousseau" II, 103 instead of II, 18 (where, also, "Sohn Schlichtegrolls" is given, while the Text calls him "Schwager"); "Rosenstiel" II, 120 instead of II, 35; "Ritz" II, 121 instead of II, 36; "Rudolphi" II, 126, 128, 167, 170, 173, 186 instead of II, 40, 42, 81, 85, 88, 101; "Reinheimer" II, 151, 154 instead of II, 66, 68; "Schaumann" II, 156 instead of II, 71; "Riepenhausen" II, 169 instead of II, 84; "Weiss" II, 181 instead of II, 191; "von Ruhmor" II, 197 instead of II, 112; and the following omissions occur: Johannes Bücking (II, 66); Sachsen, Hessen (II, 101); Franken (II, 103); Dru (II, 148); Baszermann (II, 159); Carlsruh (II, 170); Batt (II, 181); also a number of additional occurrences of names that are given in the *Register* were overlooked. The following misprints may be noted: "Übung" for "Übung (XXII, l.16); "hm" for "ihm" (XXVII, second last line); "sti" for "ist" (I, 99, l.19); "uud" for "und" (I, 142, l.7); "Oich" for "Dich" (II, 28, l.8); "Dmit ir" for "mit Dir" (II, 48, l.3).

These minor errors notwithstanding, we have a capital edition of one of the real monuments of the Romantic School, in which neither the editor nor the publishers have spared pains to make the work internally and externally as nearly perfect as is possible in the first edition of so difficult an undertaking. Great credit is due the editor for making accessible this interesting and important document, and we all owe him a debt of gratitude for his work.

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